

Advent

Advent Guide

Advent, formed from a Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival,” helps us remember the coming of Jesus Christ. It’s the celebration of the first advent of Jesus on that Christmas morning and our anxiously awaiting His second coming as King of all kings. The season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting. It’s a time to reflect upon the promises of God and to anticipate the fulfillment of those promises. We take time to celebrate that God is faithful, has been faithful, and He will be faithful.

We are inviting your family to join together with millions of Christians around the world to prepare for the Christmas season through the observance of Advent. There are several different traditions people use to celebrate the Advent season. One popular tradition involves the use of Advent wreaths and candles. This symbolic tradition is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the light of the world (Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-9, 8:12). Each week a new candle is lit in anticipation of the final lighting on Christmas Eve. Inexpensive Advent wreaths and candles can usually be found at stores such as Mardels, Hobby Lobby or Michael’s.

Advent is typically celebrated the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, but the best celebration is the one that matches the rhythm of your family. The activities in the Advent Guide can be used as weekly devotions for the traditional span of Advent (*December 2 – December 24*), or you could use one activity per day in the week leading up to Christmas Day. Do whatever best helps your family to celebrate Jesus’ first coming and anticipate His second coming.

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WEEK/DAY 1: WE NEED HOPE

LIGHT ONE ADVENT CANDLE.

Bible Reading GENESIS 3; ROMANS 3:10-12, 23

Devotional

The world is a broken place – the news we read every day tells us that. As Christians, we understand that the cause of all brokenness in the world is the original sin of Adam and Eve. That sin has been passed on to every man, woman and child. Nothing has escaped its curse. That's why we must look outside of ourselves for our hope. We who need hope cannot be the source of our own hope. Jesus Christ is our only hope!

Activity

Gather the family around the table and prepare a bowl of ice cream for each family member. Discuss how good the ice cream will taste and how much each person enjoys it. Instead of sprinkles and chocolate syrup, top your bowl of ice cream with dirt and dish detergent. Explain to your family how the ruined ice cream reminds us that God's perfect creation was broken by sin. But remind them that God has a plan to make his creation new again through Jesus Christ and because of that we can have hope. Now prepare a new bowl of ice cream and enjoy it with your family!

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you try to find hope for the brokenness of life apart from Christ?
2. Romans 3:12 says that "no one does good, not even one." In what ways are the "good" things you do still stained by sin? Can we do good things for the wrong reasons?

End with Prayer

Pray together as a family for God's unconditional grace to be made real to you. Pray for family members and friends who are not saved to come to know God's saving grace. End your time together singing one or two Christmas worship songs.

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WEEK/DAY 2: GOD GIVES US HOPE

LIGHT TWO ADVENT CANDLES.

Bible Reading GENESIS 12:1-3, 15:1-6; GALATIANS 3:7-9, 27-29

Devotional

God promised Abraham that despite his age and the age of his wife, he would have an heir that would be a blessing to the whole world. God chose to bless Abraham as an act of grace, not because Abraham deserved it. And because Abraham believed the promise of God would be fulfilled, God considered Abraham to be righteous. How does Abraham relate to our salvation? First, Jesus Christ is the promised heir of Abraham who is a blessing to the world. Second, like Abraham, God chose us for salvation as an act of grace, and, like Abraham, we receive his blessing of salvation because we believe. We have hope because through Christ we are heirs of God's promise to Abraham.

Activity

Make a promise to your family about something you will do later in the week... maybe it's to get a Christmas tree, decorate the tree or make cookies, etc. Emphasize that you are making a promise and they will need to wait for this special activity until later in the week. Make the connection that God gave hope to Abraham and the whole world when He promised a Savior who would conquer sin and death. Later in the week, keep your promise to your family then read aloud 2 Corinthians 1:20. Talk about how Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise and everything we hope for and need.

Discussion Questions

1. Did it surprise you to realize that the promise of blessing made to Abraham was fulfilled through the coming of Jesus Christ?
2. God chose Abraham as an act of grace. He chooses us as an act of grace too. Do you struggle believing that God chooses you out of love, not because you deserve it?

End with Prayer

Pray together as a family for God's unconditional grace to be made real to you. Pray for family members and friends who are not saved to come to know God's saving grace. End your time together singing one or two Christmas worship songs.

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WEEK/DAY 3: HOPE IS NEVER LOST

LIGHT THREE ADVENT CANDLES.

Bible Reading ISAIAH 9:6-7

Devotional

Sometimes we lose hope because our circumstances become too difficult. The prophet Isaiah wrote at a time of crisis for Israel's southern kingdom, Judah. The leaders of Judah had turned away from believing in the promises of God and instead looked for security in the promises of the world. Although Isaiah prophesied judgment for Judah's sin, he also preached the "good news" that despite Judah's unfaithfulness, God would still be faithful to his promises. God would fulfill his promise to Abraham by bringing a savior into the world, and the savior would be the Son of God who would establish a kingdom that would last forever. Isaiah reminds us that we should never lose hope when God himself is the basis for our hope.

Activity

Hide a new toy or candy bar in a secret location of your house. Create a treasure map or series of maps that will lead your family throughout the house to find the treasure. After the treasure is found, talk about how important the map was for finding the treasure. God has promised us the greatest treasure we could ever want—a Savior. Share how the Bible serves as God's treasure map that leads us to find Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so hard to have hope when our circumstances are difficult? What does that say about where we look to find hope?
2. One of the titles of Jesus is Prince of Peace. In what way would you like for Jesus to increase your peace?

End with Prayer

Pray together as a family for God's grace in the midst of hardships your family, neighbors and friends may be facing. Pray also for unresolved conflict where God's peace is needed. Thank God that his faithfulness to himself and his promises are your real reason to have hope. End your time together singing one or two Christmas worship songs.

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WEEK/DAY 4: GOD GIVES US HOPE

LIGHT FOUR ADVENT CANDLES.

Bible Reading LUKE 1:26-56; 2:1-7

Devotional

For centuries Israel waited for its messiah to be born. Finally, the prophecies were being fulfilled, but not in the way Israel expected. Rather than being born in a palace to a princess, our savior was born in a manger to a young girl no one knew. The world values riches and power, but our savior was born into poverty. The way that the hope of God comes to us is usually not the way that we expect. Often God will demonstrate his power and glory using a means that is unexpected so that we will not be mistaken in seeing that it is God who is truly at work.

Activity

Choose a night this week to eat dinner and/or sleep on the floor as a family. Before eating or going to sleep, read Luke 2:1-7. Talk about the long journey, the stress, and the inconvenience of the events in these verses. While the surroundings of that night were less than ideal, Mary and Joseph found themselves sitting in the presence of their Savior. As a family, discuss some of the stresses or distractions of the Christmas season that can steal the focus and joy of Christ's coming. As you eat dinner or sleep on the floor, ask God to make this temporary discomfort a constant reminder that Jesus—the hope for the hopeless—is the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

Discussion Questions

1. Why would the God of the universe come to earth with such humble beginnings?
2. As Christians in America we often struggle with believing that hardships are a part of God's providential plans for us. What hardship has God allowed in your life to increase your hope found in him?

End with Prayer

Pray for the ways you and your family need to see God's hope in Jesus more clearly. Pray as well for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who live with hardships we never face. End your time together singing one or two Christmas worship songs.

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CHRISTMAS EVE: HOPE IS HERE

LIGHT ALL FIVE ADVENT CANDLES.

Bible Reading LUKE 2:8-20

Devotional

Hope is not a feeling. Hope is a person! Tonight, we celebrate that the long-awaited promised Savior has been born. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, left the heavenly realms and took on our flesh in order to save us from the brokenness of sin. God is glorified in us when we worship him for the hope that has poured into us through Jesus Christ.

Activity

Choose a random time when the family is engaged in other tasks and hustle throughout the house blowing a trumpet, shouting, or banging on pots and pans. Do your best to startle and alert the family that something is happening. After the family is fully alert, sit down and discuss the feeling the shepherds might have had when the heavenly host of angels announced the birth of Jesus. Talk about how that might have been terrifying at first, but then very exciting to know that what you had hoped for had finally arrived! Read Luke 2:8-20 aloud for your family. Spend some time thanking God for the hope found in Jesus Christ!!

End with Prayer

Spend time in prayer giving God glory for all the ways that he is faithful to us. Thank him for providing for your salvation through Jesus Christ. Pray for those you know who are far from God. End your time together singing one or two Christmas worship songs.

